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Chairman: Mr. Niculescu (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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Agenda item 118: Programme planning

Consideration of the medium-term plan for the period 2000-2005 (A/55/6, A/55/16, A/C.2/55/5)

1. **Mr. Shihab (Maldives)** said that on numerous occasions, his country had stressed the importance of the timely implementation of the outcome of the Earth Summit, especially Agenda 21 and subsequent measures, including the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It was profoundly disappointed, therefore, at the scant progress in that direction. When the Barbados Programme of Action had been adopted by the international community, the small island developing States had been elated, because it promised them support in meeting many of their sustainable development challenges. However, the pace of its execution had been very slow. Although the small island developing States had made extensive efforts to fulfil their own commitments under the Programme of Action, most of the developed countries continued to ignore their critical needs. In fact, development

assistance had declined at a time when it was most needed and the international community had been less than responsive to efforts at capacity-building, access to existing technologies and the need to develop new ones appropriate to the special needs of those States.

2. It was no longer possible to ignore the damage to national economies and ecosystems caused by such climatic phenomena as El Niño. Maldives was experiencing the adverse effects of coral bleaching, which was destroying its own reef system and those in many other parts of the world. Its beaches were being eroded, while saltwater intrusion endangered the viability of settlements on many of its islands. In countries which depended on marine resources and tourism, the destruction of the natural habitat would surely be disastrous, and unfortunately, there was little those countries could do about it on their own. The international community did not seem to comprehend that the small island developing States were the first victims of unsustainable and destructive exploitation of the world's fragile environment by countries far away from them. His delegation reiterated the same sentiments expressed at the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, cautioning the international community of the consequences of inaction.

3. At the Millennium Summit, the President of Maldives had addressed the need to develop a vulnerability index that truly captured the unique features of those States. His delegation was delighted that the Millennium Declaration called upon the international community to expedite the early ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and hoped that it would come into force by 2002, the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It hoped that the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would address clean development mechanisms and would be able to agree on specific measures.

4. Maldives, along with other small island developing States, would continue its efforts to promote sustainable development and protect the environment at the national, regional and international levels in the hope that the international community would hear their voices.

5. **Mr. Swe (Myanmar)** said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement of Nigeria on behalf

of the Group of 77 and China. It welcomed the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which had been signed by 68 out of 177 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Protocol was an important step for biosafety, especially transboundary movement of any living modified organism resulting from modern biotechnology that could have an adverse effect on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The Cartagena Protocol offered many developing countries an opportunity for access to information technology, thus contributing to the implementation of Chapter 16 of Agenda 21. For that reason, Myanmar was giving serious consideration to signing the Protocol.

6. As a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Myanmar attached great importance to the preservation of its diverse flora and fauna; it had about 7,000 species of plants, over 1,000 species of birds, more than 300 species of mammals and over 400 species of reptiles and amphibians, including endangered species. The 1992 Forest Law provided adequate coverage for the conservation of forests and biodiversity, and in addition, the 1994 Protection of Wildlife, Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law focused on the protection of wildlife and ecosystems in accordance with the guidelines of international conventions.

7. Desertification was a phenomenon which was worsening, affecting some one billion people and 30 per cent of the Earth's total surface area. Without immediate action, desertification would become a major global crisis of the twenty-first century. The Convention to Combat Desertification should receive the same treatment as the other environmental conventions. His delegation hoped that the forthcoming session of the Conference of the Parties would provide an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the Convention in arresting the spread of desertification and to consider further efforts in that field. His delegation commended the activities of the Global Mechanism in mobilizing the necessary financial resources for the implementation of the Convention. It called on Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the strengthening of the Mechanism.

8. Myanmar's efforts in combating desertification were based on preventive measures for lands which were not yet degraded or only slightly affected. One of the major tools was extensive reforestation, which

allowed soils to retain moisture. Another initiative was the "Greening Project" for the critical districts of the arid zone of central Myanmar, which included a reforestation scheme which had raised a total of 53,200 acres of fuelwood plantations. The programme was multi-sectoral, grassroots oriented and framed within a context of long-term environmental sustainability. National action, complemented by international cooperation, would surely contribute to the preservation and protection of the environment for future generations.

9. **Mr. Slade** (Samoa), speaking on behalf of the 37 member countries of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said that they associated themselves fully with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Inadequate attention to the environment had had serious and substantial repercussions the world over on people's health and livelihoods, in particular those of the poorest and most vulnerable: women and children. Economic and social development and environmental protection were inextricably linked. For development to be sustainable, communities must set priorities, as environmental protection must aim to serve in real and practical ways people who were already at risk, especially the poor and the most vulnerable. The Millennium Summit had served to reconfirm support for the principles set out in Agenda 21, and the international community must now turn seriously to its implementation, fashion a programme of specific measures to respond to the challenges in the report of the Secretary-General's entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000*) and translate into action the declaration issued at the Summit. In that sense, the ten-year review of the Rio Conference must not merely take stock, but must engage in the practical and progressive implementation of Agenda 21. It was necessary to find a vision for the future to capture the attention of all sectors of society, and above all young people. In more concrete terms, it was necessary to support the Secretary-General's proposal that the preparatory process for the review should start at the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and that the emphasis should be on substantive preparations at the local, national and regional levels.

10. Although the extinction of the species was a natural part of the evolutionary process, other factors had rendered the biological diversity of island

countries more threatened and vulnerable than ever before. Small island developing States were more prone to natural disasters and more vulnerable to the effects of climate variability. In addition, human activities had contributed to the degradation of biological resources. Over the years, the conservation of biological diversity had ceased to be viewed merely in terms of protecting threatened species or ecosystems; it had instead proven to be a fundamental part of sustainable development. In that regard, the States members of AOSIS were grateful for the report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Those States had gained much from being parties to the Convention. For many of them, the process of consultation for the national communications set out in the Convention had resulted in community-based activities, such as the creation of local conservation areas. The Secretariats of the Convention and the Global Environment Facility were to be commended for the support they had given to regional and national institutions in AOSIS countries.

11. The Alliance welcomed the completion of the negotiations on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and looked forward with interest to the first meeting to be held under its terms. It was planning a preparatory workshop to make its membership more aware of the implications of the adoption of the Protocol and of the need to adopt national legislation to give effect to it. It was also important that they should contribute to the development of a proposal for regional capacity-building for the coordination of regional biosafety activities. The Alliance was grateful to the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis for hosting the workshop, and to donor Governments and United Nations agencies for their contributions and support.

12. Concerning the Programme of Action adopted in Barbados, it was clear that the time had come to step up its implementation at the international level. The members of AOSIS would, of course, have to do their part, but all partners should foster an enabling environment, live up to their commitments and adopt new measures to support the small island developing States. The traditional means of development and trade support would have to be changed so as to take into account the special vulnerabilities of the States members of the Alliance. While the vulnerability index was improving, albeit slowly, the General Assembly had time and again acknowledged the constraints confronting the small island developing States, which

faced direct and specific disadvantages such as an inability to gain from economies of scale, dependence on remote and shrinking markets, the high cost of energy, transportation and communication and a fragile natural environment with little resilience to natural disasters. It was therefore absolutely crucial to the success of the Barbados Programme of Action to be able to count on the contributions of donors and international partners. In addition, it was necessary that the small island developing States themselves should work more concertedly especially in the areas of capacity-building and the strengthening of their institutions in the long term. In that connection, AOSIS, was planning to hold a workshop on trade, the environment and small island developing States in 2001, and would welcome support for that endeavour. The United Nations system had not given sufficient attention to trade-related matters, and further efforts were required. The Alliance therefore proposed that the trade support provided to its member States at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the unit dealing with those States should be strengthened and be made available to their missions in New York on a more regular basis.

13. There was a critical linkage between energy and sustainable development in all small island States, especially in connection with transport, tourism and rural development. In terms of energy requirements there was clearly a need for the delivery of technologies that were relevant to the circumstances and needs of island States. A matter of particular urgency and importance for the countries of the Alliance was the need to maintain the environmental integrity of international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol. The Alliance considered that there was a significant market potential for renewable sources of energy and related technologies not only for AOSIS countries but for all developing countries. The Committee's discussions should therefore focus on the adoption of energy efficient policies and projects and the development of renewable sources of energy. That would help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the amount of foreign exchange spent on imports of fossil fuels, and would thereby increase the amount available for national economic development, assisting developing countries in achieving sustainable development. In respect of the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, the principal aim of the AOSIS delegations was to ensure that the Protocol would not result in higher global emissions than would have been

the case if the flexible mechanisms had not been included. The Kyoto Protocol should not be used as a mechanism for the Parties mentioned in Annex I to transfer outmoded or environmentally hazardous technologies. It was therefore necessary to ensure, within the framework of the international debate on sustainable development, that priorities were established with respect to certain kinds of technologies and that those that were environmentally unsound or that did not provide long-term sustainable development benefits were excluded. Detailed discussions on the important issue of energy would be of the utmost interest at the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The AOSIS countries would hold a workshop in Cyprus in 2001, and wished to express their gratitude to the Government of Cyprus for its generosity, and to the donor countries and international agencies whose support would make that event possible.

14. The three Conventions that had resulted from the Rio Conference could create conditions conducive to the adoption of an integrated approach to their implementation. That approach must emphasize the role of capacity-building. The Alliance acknowledged the work done by the Global Environment Facility together with the Secretariats of the Conventions in that regard.

15. The information system on the overall situation of drought and desertification in AOSIS States was still in its early stages. In many regions an assessment of problems and needs was under way, and it was expected that the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification would soon gain momentum. The States members of the Alliance were looking forward to the next Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bonn later in 2000.

16. The countries of AOSIS had actively taken part in some of the informal consultations held since the thirteenth session of the subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Before the sixth Conference of the Parties, the prime concern of the AOSIS countries was that the voices of the countries most vulnerable to climate change should be heard, since they were the ones with the most to lose. World-renowned scientists working with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had acknowledged that, unless concerted action was taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the world would undergo unprecedented climatic changes and

extreme events; that was a matter of the utmost concern to members of the Alliance because they might not be able to survive such changes. International negotiations must result in an agreement on specific objectives for emission reduction so as to reduce the increasingly dangerous carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere.

17. Another matter of particular importance was adaptation to climate change. Since climate change was inevitable, it was necessary to be as prepared as possible to deal with it. The Parties to the Convention must therefore formulate a series of firm guidelines for the Global Environment Facility so that it could begin studying the more advanced phases of adaptation, independent of some of the considerations that had seemed to hold up discussions on that issue.

18. **Mr. Seki (Japan)** said that his country was actively carrying out its commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity through a range of programmes and policies. The adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety had been a highly valuable step. His country had signed the Protocol at the Fifth Conference of the Parties and was providing substantial financial support for activities undertaken under the Convention, as well as extending technical assistance through the dispatch of experts in various areas related to biodiversity.

19. If headway was to be made on the subject of desertification it was imperative to ensure cooperative action by the international community. His country had contributed a total of \$7.7 million over the past seven years in support of the activities of the Convention to Combat Desertification and had also implemented a wide variety of bilateral official development assistance (ODA) projects.

20. His country welcomed the resolution recently adopted by the Economic and Social Council (E/2000/L.32*) establishing the international arrangement on forests, and hoped that the arrangement would achieve the objective stated in the resolution.

21. The entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol by 2002 was a basic tenet of his country's climate policy. In order for the Protocol to be ratified by all countries, it was indispensable to agree on concrete rules for the Kyoto mechanism, compliance, and sinks at the sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which would be held in November. His country affirmed the

importance of assisting developing countries in the framework of joint efforts. At the sixth Conference, decisions were to be taken which should lead to effective ways of providing such assistance. For that purpose it was important to make mutual concessions and to act in the spirit of "learning by doing". What was necessary now was to ensure the entry into force of the Protocol. His country was continuing to exert its best efforts to establish a domestic policy framework which would enable it to achieve the target prescribed in the Protocol, in particular a 6 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions during the first commitment period.

22. Ms. Forde (Barbados) speaking on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that were members of the United Nations, associated herself fully with the statements made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Samoa on behalf of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), and said that the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly had confirmed the extent to which the small island developing States had been implementing the Barbados Programme of Action, and had revealed the many severe challenges which constrained the development capacity of those States. The positive results that had been achieved were a matter of pride, but the partnership component, which was so essential to the implementation of the Programme of Action, had fallen short of expectations. In that context, the Member States of CARICOM were grateful for the contribution by donor countries and agencies and urged all their partners to revisit the commitments made in Barbados.

23. The CARICOM Member States were continuing their efforts to implement the thematic areas under the Barbados Programme of Action and 12 of them were involved in the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Global Climate Change. The project, which was scheduled for completion in 2001, had received the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and was being implemented by the Organization of American States in conjunction with the Centre for Education and Development of the University of the West Indies. The CARICOM Member States were hoping to establish a permanent Caribbean centre to address the specific concerns of global climate change.

24. With respect to the security of energy supply, CARICOM had a general policy of exploiting all local natural resources and, in particular, was actively

pursuing the development of solar and wind energy which would also ensure the appropriate adaptation of those technologies to local conditions. The Caribbean was in the process of designing a region-wide approach to remove those barriers that hindered the region's efforts to achieve self reliance in energy. That initiative was supported by the German Government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and GEF. Discussions were in progress on the establishment of a global energy centre in the Caribbean geared towards training, research and demonstration.

25. The CARICOM secretariat had also established on a pilot basis a mechanism for capacity-building and more effective participation by Member States in the implementation of multilateral agreements and instruments.

26. With respect to the planning and management of water resources, the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute had organized a number of consultative meetings and training workshops to promote the implementation of integrated water resources management in CARICOM Member States. GEF was also supporting a project on integrated management of watersheds in coastal areas in Caribbean small island developing States.

27. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) had been facilitating the movement of CARICOM Member States towards the enhanced development of their preparedness to meet natural disasters. Efforts were being made for that purpose to consolidate preparedness interventions into a comprehensive disaster management system.

28. The CARICOM Member States had also prepared national biodiversity strategies and action plans in fulfilment of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and in pursuit of their objectives of sustainable management of their biological resources. Those national programmes would serve as a framework for a regional approach to the management of the region's biological and biodiversity resources. CARICOM was therefore grateful for the assistance provided by the Government of Canada to the Caribbean Fisheries Resources Assessment and Management Programme. It was also necessary, as a matter of urgency, to recognize the Caribbean as a special area in the context of sustainable development since its special characteristics merited special consideration and an innovative management approach

to embrace the concerns of all States bordering the Caribbean as well as those of the international community.

29. To increase implementation of the thematic areas of the Barbados Plan of Action, the CARICOM secretariat and the ECLAC regional office in Port-of-Spain were continuing to serve as the joint secretariat of the interim regional mechanism appointed by the bureau of the November 1997 Meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Environment. In anticipation of the Rio + 10 process, the CARICOM States were working towards the establishment of a permanent regional mechanism.

30. In view of the peculiar environmental and economic challenges facing small island developing States, it was necessary for the United Nations system, the multilateral lending agencies and the international community to move with urgency to strengthen the sustainable development prospects of that group of countries which required longer and more flexible transition arrangements, assistance to strengthen human and institutional capacity, appropriate technology transfer and support for their efforts to achieve diversification. CARICOM urged the United Nations to move speedily to complete and implement a vulnerability index for small island developing States. In that regard, the CARICOM States commended the efforts made by UNCTAD and welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the Commission on Sustainable Development on behalf of small island developing States. The United Nations should further strengthen its unit dealing with small island developing States.

31. In the framework of the Barbados Plan of Action, the small island developing States had established an impressive transregional cooperation through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and there was currently a significant sharing of information through the Small Islands Developing States Network (SIDSNET), particularly with respect to climate change.

32. The attainment of sustainable development for small island developing States required the full commitment of the international community to effect special measures to assist those countries to address the challenges of globalization, trade liberalization and economic and environmental vulnerabilities. The CARICOM Member States looked forward to the

revitalization of the global partnership that had led to the commitments of the Barbados Programme of Action and to a resurgence of political will matched by adequate technical and financial resources for the Programme's full and effective implementation.

33. **Mr. Glenza** (Tunisia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His Government attached great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, since it believed that the control of desertification and mitigation of the effects of drought were essential for sustainable development, particularly agricultural and rural development. The universal nature of the Convention and the interest it had aroused in the international community were demonstrated by the increasing number of States which had acceded to it. The submission of reports on the implementation of the Convention, including 40 reports which had already been submitted by the African countries, constituted an important stage in the implementation of the Convention.

34. The international community, and particularly the developed countries, should intensify their support initiatives, since the control of desertification was a crucial international undertaking. The global and integral dimension of environmental protection was totally incompatible with a selective approach to the problems. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification must therefore be placed on an equal footing with the other documents adopted in the spirit of the Earth Summit. Within the framework of the commitments they had undertaken for the benefit of the countries of the South, the developed countries should mobilize additional financial resources, facilitate the transfer of technology, experience and specialized knowledge, and support the efforts of the developing States parties, particularly the African countries, to formulate and apply their own strategies to combat desertification and drought. Tunisia was prepared to share the experience it had acquired in that sphere.

35. After many years of efforts, Tunisia had been successful in taking into account the human aspect of the problem of desertification and was giving due importance to socio-economic issues when analysing problems and seeking solutions. In addition, more was known about the mechanisms of erosion and desertification, and about socially acceptable and viable control techniques. It should be stressed,

however, that the developing countries could not carry out the tasks assigned to them unless they did so in a collective context which involved the international community as a whole.

36. The fact that over one billion people, mainly in the developing countries, lacked access to drinking water, and half of mankind did not have adequate sanitation facilities, along with the unplanned development of water resources, gave rise to deep concern. His delegation therefore supported the Secretary-General's call for public awareness and mobilization campaigns to bring home to people the extent and causes of current and impending water crisis.

37. Tunisia was making great efforts to ensure the increasing use of new and renewable sources of energy. In that context, it had undertaken a programme for the diversification of energy sources through the development of renewable sources which would help reduce production costs and protect the environment. Recently the first wind-powered electric power station had been inaugurated. When its 32 wind generators had been installed, wind intensity and velocity had been taken into account, as well as the proximity of a medium voltage electricity network. His delegation called for an increase in the transfer to the developing countries of technology and knowledge in relation to new and renewable sources of energy.

38. The small island developing States were facing major problems, in particular rising sea levels, integration into the world economy, the control of various types of pollution, and the intensification of natural disasters. The international community should therefore support the efforts of those States so as to ensure their development and their integration into the world economy, particularly through the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the recommendations emanating from the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. The international community, and particularly the wealthy countries, should also intensify their efforts to help the developing countries preserve the environment, which in turn depended on development and sustained economic growth.

39. Mr. Mózes (Hungary) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union. Safeguarding the environment was a fundamental task for Governments. By definition, risks

to the environment could not be tackled solely within a national framework; the countries concerned must take joint decisions and action. In that respect, he drew attention to a regional environmental initiative of his Government aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in environmental protection in central and eastern Europe, making the existing organizational structures more operational and more efficient, and creating an enforcement mechanism in the field of environmental security. Under that initiative, environmental security would not be viewed as an internal affair of a given country, and countries would increase the exchange of data and ensure transparency through the provision of specific information on environmental hazards, sources of potential danger, industrial technologies requiring increased monitoring, and State funding for environmental protection. The initiative also aimed to create institutional arrangements to help eliminate factors jeopardizing environmental security, in particular factors with a cross-border effect, and stressed that the installation of systems to predict environmental damage, a readiness to prevent or diminish such damage, and the assumption of State responsibility for damage, were prerequisites for environmental cooperation among the countries of the region.

40. In view of the specific conditions of the central and eastern European region, air and water pollution were the prime threat to human health and the ecosystem of the countries of the region. His Government's initiative stemmed from the various environmental problems encountered by Hungary and other countries in a very specific geographical region which was also undergoing an immensely complex transition. Protection of the environment therefore went well beyond purely ecological considerations. Furthermore, the prospects of accession to the European Union were playing a catalytic role in the environmental sphere, in view of the strict standards established by the European Union. Hungary called on the various subregional, regional and international organizations and institutions to support that regional environmental initiative and give further momentum to common efforts to preserve the natural habitat.

41. Mr. Ainchil (Argentina) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made at the 18th meeting by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China with regard to item 95 (b) entitled "Convention on Biological Diversity", and the

statement made on the same topic by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Rio Group.

42. Argentina recognized the difficulties involved in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, especially in relation to the issues which were of the greatest concern to the developing countries, the countries which possessed the greatest biodiversity. In assessing the implementation of the Convention, Argentina stressed the importance of the work to be carried out by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in preparing for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. If that meeting was to be successful, specific agreements would have to be reached on the effective implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing House. That would help generate greater confidence between exporters and importers of living modified organisms for human and animal consumption and for processing. The process of identification of shipments of such organisms should lead to a non-bureaucratic and transparent process which would eliminate all barriers to world trade in such organisms, except strictly technical barriers.

43. In order to progress in achieving the objectives of the sustainable use of biodiversity, the facilitating of access to genetic resources, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of resources, greater political will was needed on the part of the developed countries. On the question of access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, Argentina supported the application of the multilateral system of access, which was the subject of negotiations under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with a view to harmonizing the International Undertaking with the Convention on Biological Diversity. However, its support for that process did not mean that Argentina was satisfied with the slow speed at which the developed countries were applying the procedures to facilitate access to other genetic resources within the bilateral system, as established in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Furthermore, the agreements on the development of biological resources drawn up between some countries, including Argentina and other neighbouring countries, were not sufficient. Unless progress was made on that issue, it was likely that the difficulties of acceding to genetic resources would increase, particularly resources destined for pharmacological use. For that reason, efforts must be

stepped up to implement the provisions of article 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other related articles, article 16, concerning access to and transfer of technology, and article 8 (j) concerning the need to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities. It was also particularly important to apply the provisions of article 7, concerning the identification and monitoring of components of biological diversity, since without an inventory of such resources, it would be very difficult to facilitate access to unknown resources.

44. Lastly, and even though over 170 countries had acceded to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Argentina called upon the most technologically advanced countries which were not yet parties to the Convention to ratify it.

Agenda item 118: Programme planning (A/55/6, A/55/16 and A/C.2/55/5)

45. **The Chairman** reminded delegations that they could submit written comments for transmittal to the Fifth Committee.

Other matters

46. **The Chairman** announced that the following countries had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/55/L.4 entitled "Integration of the economies in transition into the world economy": Austria, Canada, Fiji, France, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

47. **Mr. Bahaitham** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation wished to become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/55/L.7 entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources".

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.